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SUBJECT: EMBASSY MANILA HONORS VETERANS' SERVICE

¶1. SUMMARY: In a Veterans Day ceremony at the Manila American Cemetery on November 11, Ambassador Kenney and guest speaker former Philippine President Fidel V. Ramos honored the service and sacrifice of U.S. and Filipino veterans. In her remarks, the Ambassador noted the common sacrifices of both Filipinos and Americans in the struggle for freedom. The event, attended by U.S. and Filipino veterans as well as senior Philippine government and military officials, received favorable coverage by the local media and highlighted the U.S.'s and Philippines' shared history and continuing commitment to the preservation of democracy. END SUMMARY.

AMBASSADOR HONORS VETERANS' SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

¶2. The Ambassador paid tribute to the service of U.S. and Filipino veterans at the November 11 Veterans Day ceremony, held at the American Cemetery and Memorial in Manila. Following the presentation of colors by an honor guard of U.S. Marines and Filipino soldiers, attendees participated in a moment of silence to remember the courage and sacrifice of our military men and women. Veterans in the audience stood and were recognized by the assembled audience of more than 700 guests. During her remarks, the Ambassador expressed her thanks to both U.S. and Philippine veterans, and noted the strength of the two countries' ongoing partnership. In addition, she hailed the service of Department of Veterans Affairs Manila (USDVA) employees for ensuring our country fulfills its commitment to those who serve, noting that at the USDVA, "every day is Veterans Day."

RAMOS: SOLDIERS' BATTLES DON'T END ON THE BATTLEFIELD

¶3. In his remarks, former Philippine President Fidel Ramos -- a West Point graduate and distinguished veteran himself -- paid tribute to the "17,202 U.S. soldiers, sailors, and airmen who lie here; the largest concentration of America's war dead in World War II, among them many of Filipino blood and origin." He also honored soldiers whose service did not end on the battlefield, stating: "Some say the most noble way to die is in battle, defending your country; but I say it is equally noble to drop dead peacefully, going about the normal business of life -- paying your taxes on time, voting in the next election." He noted that old soldiers still have many battles left to fight, including "against injustice, bad governance, poverty and corruption."

¶4. The American Cemetery and Memorial welcomed over 700 attendees to this year's ceremony, including many World War II veterans who shrugged off the mid-day heat with moving tales of their survival of the Bataan Death March and Japanese internment camps. The event highlighted the shared history between U.S. and Filipino veterans and received extensive, positive coverage by the local media.

KENNEY